

Appl. No. 09/717,841
Amdt. dated March 31, 2003
Reply to Office action of Jan. 29, 2003

GENERAL AUTHORIZATION UNDER 37 CFR 1.136(a)(3)

The Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to treat this or any future reply requiring a petition for an extension of time, as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time.

The Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge fees under 37 CFR 1.17 to Deposit Account 14-1190.

Further, if it is determined that any other fees are due in this application, or if it is determined that an overpayment has been made, the Patent and Trademark Office is hereby authorized to charge or credit Deposit Account 14-1190 as appropriate.

Appl. No. 09/717,841
Amdt. dated March 31, 2003
Reply to Office action of Jan. 29, 2003

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

On January 29, 2003, the Patent Office mailed an Office communication setting a shortened one-month period for response. The communication requests the filing of "essentially a clean copy of the file contents as the Applicant understands them to be regarding the claims." Although the communication states that Applicants' filing of June 2002 was non-responsive, it is clear from the text of the communication that this is not the case. In fact, the communication states that the "entry of the amendment has been confused." The statement that the "entry" has been confused implies that there has been some type of confusion on the part of the Patent and Trademark Office. Applicants will not at this time inquire further into the circumstances creating the confusion related to the entry of the claims and will not at this time contest the claim of non-responsiveness. Rather, Applicants offer this Response in order to assist the Examiner and advance the prosecution of the application.

It is believed that the clearest way to satisfy the request for a clean copy of the claims is to employ the revised format as set forth in "Amendments in a Revised Format Now Permitted," Off. Gazette Pat. Office (February 25, 2003). As is made clear by the status identifiers presented in parenthesis at the beginning of each claim and also by the lack of any underlined or strikethrough text in any of the claims, this response has made no amendments to the claims. Rather, the revised format is being used to provide the clean copy requested. Use of the revised format carries with it the added benefit of also communicating the status information presented by the status identifiers.

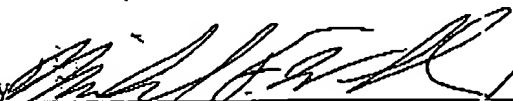
Appl. No. 09/717,841
Amdt. dated March 31, 2003
Reply to Office action of Jan. 29, 2003

In order to assist the Office in rectifying any confusion concerning the current state of the claims, a brief history of actions taken regarding the claims will now be presented. The above-captioned application was originally filed with claims 1-8. Claims 9 and 10 were added via a Preliminary Amendment that was filed on June 12, 2001. A Response filed on June 13, 2002, added claims 11-15 and canceled claims 3 and 5-10. An Amendment filed by facsimile transmission on November 5, 2002, added claims 16-44 and canceled claims 11-15. Thus, claims 1, 2, 4 and 16-44 are presently pending in this application. Claims 3 and 5-15 have been previously canceled. Applicants also note that an Information Disclosure Statement was filed in this application on November 7, 2002, by first class mail.

It is hoped that the information provided in this Response will meet the needs of the Examiner as expressed in the Office communication of January 29th. If additional information is needed or if copies of any of the above listed filings are needed, please feel free to contact the undersigned. Since this filing has done nothing to change the number or the content of the claims, it is believed that no additional claim fees have been generated. A Transmittal Form and a Petition for an Extension of Time Under 37 CFR 1.136 accompany this Response. Applicants respectfully request examination of the pending claims and the issuance of a timely Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully Submitted,

SIMMONS, PERRINE, ALBRIGHT &
ELLWOOD, P.L.C.

By 

Michael F. Williams
Reg. No. 39,875
Tel.: (319) 366-7641 ext. 222
115 Third Street SE, Suite 1200
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401-1266

FAX RECEIVED
MAR 31 2003
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800